



Maynard's Wetlands and You: A Landowner's Guide to Living with Wetlands



by the Maynard Conservation Commission:
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1. Why did I receive this flier?

*This guide is designed to help you understand your rights and responsibilities as an abutter to a river, stream, or wetland. **You have a very special piece of property; you have the unique opportunity to experience the beauty and ever-changing nature of a wetland—right in your own backyard!** In densely developed towns such as Maynard, every piece of wetland is particularly precious.*

As an abutter, you also play a big role in maintaining the wetland's health. We hope you will help protect our valuable and threatened wetlands for all of us and for other species dependent on them, and for the generations to come.

2. Are there are special laws that apply to properties close to wetlands?

Yes, there are both state and local laws, but they are easy to comply with. The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act, and the Maynard Wetland Administration Bylaw require permits for proposed new construction, landscaping, or clearing activities which, if violated, can result in severe fines. See questions 4, 5, and 6, and check with the Conservation Commission; we are here to help.

3. What qualifies as a wetland? I have a depression that floods in the spring. My neighbor has soggy land that floods during heavy rains. Do we have wetlands (and regulations) to deal with?

It sounds as if you may. Your "depression" may be a "vernal pool"—a temporary pond that hosts a wealth of unique wildlife and some threatened species, and is a treasure for anyone interested in natural history. Most remaining vernal pools are found in wooded areas. Vernal pools are protected under the Maynard Wetland Protection Bylaw. Your neighbors "soggy area" may also be a wetland protected by the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and Maynard Wetland Protection bylaw.

4. What can't I do near a river, stream, or wetland?

The State of Massachusetts has designated a 200-foot border along each side of every river and perennial stream in the State as a "riverfront", and a 100-foot border around all other wetlands—some activities in these areas (activities associated with new clearing, dumping, and construction) are regulated (i.e., require a permit). The Town of Maynard has designated a 50-foot border around all wetlands as a "no-build zone" for new projects.

- *It is illegal to undertake any new building, new grading, or new tree or brush cutting within 200 feet of a river or stream without a permit or approval from the Maynard Conservation Commission. If you want to do this, please call the Commission to talk with us about your plans.*
- *It is illegal to dump leaves, grass, brush, dirt, or any refuse in waterways or wetlands. Even natural items harm wetland wildlife habitat and contaminate wetlands.*

5. What can I do near a river, stream, or wetland?

Enjoy it! You can take a walk, have a picnic, take photographs, observe wildlife, go boating. And you can, of course, maintain existing structures and landscapes that were created before the wetlands laws were enacted or have been given approval by the Conservation Commission, as long as that maintenance doesn't degrade the river or stream. So, don't worry; mowing your lawn or planting in an existing garden is just fine.

If you have questions about a new activity you would like to undertake, check with the Conservation Commission—we'll give you pointers on getting the job done while complying with wetland laws.

6. If I want to do a project close to a river, stream, or wetland, what should I do?

Anyone who wants to build, grade, and/or cut brush, trees and other vegetation within 200 feet of a river or stream must first **get permission from the Conservation Commission**. Call the Commission's office to be sure about what to do. In general, you must fill out a permit application (we have blanks for you), attend a public hearing (easy), and resolve any concerns about protecting the wetlands (we help). Then you may receive a permit for the work.

7. What is so important about wetlands?

The broad corridors of wetlands and woods associated with rivers and streams help **provide our drinking water, vital flood control, and diverse wildlife habitat**. We must preserve these precious areas. Currently the health of our wetlands is threatened by the invasion of non-native plants, excessive nutrients, litter, and toxicants.



8. What wildlife can be found in and around Maynard's river, streams, and wetlands?

All along the Assabet river and its tributaries one can find a variety of wildlife—**herons, ducks, hawks, river otters, muskrat, raccoons, deer, foxes, turtles, salamanders, frogs, snakes, fish, and insects are common**. Birds of all varieties abound in our wetland woods. Take a walk, you may be surprised at what you find!

9. I'm concerned about dangerous mosquito-borne illnesses. Don't mosquitoes breed in wetlands?

They do, but almost all mosquitoes are harmless to humans and all play a vital role in the food web. You can most effectively protect yourself from the threat of disease by wearing long clothing and mosquito repel-

lant, avoiding mosquito-rich areas in the mornings and evenings when mosquitoes are most active, and emptying containers of standing water (in birdbaths, old tires, tarps, etc.) where dangerous mosquitoes like to breed. Do **NOT** use insecticides close to a wetland. See the Center for Disease Control's (www.cdc.gov), the National Institutes of Health (www.nih.gov), and the Maynard Board of Health (www.web.maynard.ma.us/gov/boh) web pages for more information.

10. Besides abiding by the laws, what else can I do to help protect wetlands?

There is a lot citizens can do to help.

- **Do not use fertilizers on or near waterways.** Fertilizers contain chemicals that can disturb the fragile chemical balance of fresh water and cause "blooms" of nuisance plants that turn the water green, cause rotting odors in warmer months, and ultimately destroy the waterway.
- **Do not use herbicides, insecticides, other pesticides, or deicers near waterways.** They kill plants and animals indiscriminately.
- **Let native vegetation grow and native wildlife thrive**—all species are critical components of these ecosystems. Restore part of your lawn to native vegetation. The New England Wildflower Society (Garden in the Woods) has excellent resources (www.newfs.org).
- **Pick up trash** that falls in or near the water. Animals can choke on litter and trash can contaminate the water. Participate in the annual Maynard clean-up of land and waterways, sponsored by the Maynard Community Gardeners (www.maynard.ma.us/mcg for dates) and the DPW. Participate in the Organization for the Assabet River's annual clean-up (www.assabetriver.org).
- **Bring your ideas, concerns, and suggestions to the Conservation Commission.** The Commission meets the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 6:30 pm.
- **Help spread the word that our waterways need our attention!**

The Maynard Conservation Commission is dedicated to protecting the natural resources in Maynard and is charged with enforcing the wetlands laws and bylaws for the people of Maynard. If you have questions about this guide, would like additional information about protecting natural resources, or would like to help, contact the Commission: at the Town Building, 190 Main Street, Maynard, 01754; by calling (978) 897-1029 #3 and leaving a message; or by writing to conscom@juno.com; or by visiting our website at <http://web.maynard.ma.us/gov/conscom/>.